

From: Michael Mainz

March 8, 2022 10:30AM Public Hearing - SB-00278

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I am here to speak in favor of SB-00278.

I am a retired I.T. professional. I did my first software development project in 1967 for a computer with 4K of memory, no disk drives and no tape drives; just punched cards. I have been involved in Community Access program production since 1984 when we used 3/4" tape. From 1992 until 2010, I was a member of the nine-city Cable TV Commission in the NW suburbs of Minneapolis, MN. After retiring, I moved to Connecticut. Since 2013, I have been a member of the local Cable TV Advisory Council and the State-wide Video Advisory Council.

Technology is constantly evolving, improving, changing. From the original community antenna systems to satellite dishes, the DOCSIS standard, fiber optic cabling, from analog to digital and most recently from traditional cable tv transmission to internet protocol. Television programming via internet protocol - a different kind of set top box but using the same wires, the same poles, the same right-of-way.

As customers have opted for streaming video delivery instead of traditional cable TV services, MVPD providers have interpreted 16-331 to repudiate the PEG fee and the gross earnings tax requirements. As a result, the non-profit Community Access Providers and the MVPD-operated Community Access studios have suffered ever shrinking funding and the state has lost significant revenue.

To attempt to survive, access studios have reduced hours and staffing, delayed equipment replacements, shutdown websites and more. It is critical that the state statute catch up to the current reality and require a PEG fee to be collected from all MVPD customers.

The statute as currently written ties the PEG fee and the gross earnings tax to traditional cable video programming service. The fee and tax should be tied to the use of the right-of-way; not to a particular service.